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Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$375,000 in Farm Improvements Grants

BOSTON – January 6, 2017 – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced seven Massachusetts farms with land permanently protected from development through the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR) have been selected to receive up to \$375,000 in total grant funding from the APR Improvement Program (AIP). AIP helps sustain active commercial farming on land that has already been protected through the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' (MDAR) APR Program. Additionally, AIP provides technical assistance and business analysis to help improve the productivity and profitability of participating farms with the goal of enhancing the significance of APR farm operations and their contribution to the state's agricultural industry.

"Massachusetts' agricultural industry provides important jobs within local communities and produces farm fresh products," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "Our Administration remains committed to supporting the Commonwealth's farms, and I congratulate the AIP Grant Program recipients on today's grants and on their commitment to agriculture and the environment."

"By providing this uniquely designed APR Improvement Program to enhance the operations of farms across the Commonwealth, which contribute greatly to local, regional, and state economies, we are assisting and encouraging their long-term success," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "It is incredibly important that we all support local farms within our communities and throughout the state to ensure operations continue for the next generation to benefit from."

This year's 2016 grant awards are located at APR farms in the towns of Adams, Amherst, Hadley, Leyden, and New Braintree and the City of Haverhill. Farmers selected for grants through the AIP will receive technical and business assistance as well as grants for farm infrastructure improvements. Grants will be used towards developing an orchard as well as funding new and expanded agricultural buildings including a livestock barn, a hay storage building, two farmstands, and improved infrastructure on two dairy farms.

"These Farm Improvements Grants and the technical assistance provided by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources offer APR farms the opportunity to improve upon their infrastructure and agricultural businesses," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes and supports the valuable economic contributions that commercial farms in our great state provide."

"The Department of Agricultural Resources appreciates the commitment these farm families have made to keep their land in agriculture and to preserve the future viability of agricultural enterprises," **said MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux**. "The Baker-Polito Administrations understands the commitment these farm families have made to keeping their land in agriculture and provides assistance to help their farm businesses stay viable."

Since it first began in 2009, AIP has provided a total of \$4.5 million in grants (averaging \$68,462 per farm) and more than \$405,000 in technical assistance (averaging \$6,231 per farm) to 65 Massachusetts farms that own a combined total of approximately 9,193 acres of permanently protected farmland within the Commonwealth.

The seven Massachusetts APR farms receiving AIP grants and technical assistance include:

<u>Farm</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Nomination</u>
Ayrhill Farms	Adams	Hay storage barn	\$50,000
Bree-Z-Knoll Farm LLC	Leyden	Dairy infrastructure	\$100,000
Chris's Farmland/Stasinos Farms	Haverill	Orchard development	\$50,000
Cook Farm	Hadley	Dairy infrastructure	\$100,000
Kip's Christmas Tree Farm	New Braintree	Livestock barn	\$25,000
Small Ones Farm	Amherst	Farmstand	\$25,000
Walker Farm at Whortleberry Hill	New Braintree	Farmstand	\$25,000

"Cook Farm has been a family-run dairy farm since 1909 which has been widely recognized for its breeding stock and quality milk and ice cream," **said State Representative John Scibak (D-South Hadley)**. "This grant will improve the dairy's infrastructure and ensure the future viability of this five-generation, family operation for years to come."

"I appreciate the Baker-Polito Administration's recognition of Chris' Farm Stand as a worthy recipient for an Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) Improvement Grant, where this state funding will go toward orchard development on the farm," **said State Senator Kathleen O'Connor Ives (D-Newburyport)**. "Generations of Haverhill and Merrimack Valley residents visit this family-owned and operated sustainable farm to get their locally grown produce, so we all benefit from their continued success."

"Our farmers devote their lives to keeping farms viable which benefits all of us who rely on local products and produce and appreciate the land that is kept in open space," **said Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer), Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture**. "I thank the administration for their commitment to protecting and preserving our agricultural heritage."

"I appreciate the Baker Administration's continued support of our local Massachusetts farms," **said State Representative Donald Berthiaume (R-Spencer)**. "This funding will go a long way in helping these farms after such a dry season."

For more information about AIP, visit the [MDAR program website](#).

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DAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit DAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/mdarcommish.

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